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Lies and the Vices of Deception

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This essay applies to the morality of lying and other deception a sketch of a kind of virtues-based, input-driven, role-centered, patient-focused, ethical theory. Among the questions treated are: What is wrong with lying? Is it always and intrinsically immoral? Can it be correct, as some have vigorously maintained, that lying is morally wrong in some circumstances where other forms of deliberate dissimulation are not? If so, how can that be? And how can it be that lying to someone is immoral when other, harsher ways of treating her are permissible? The essay examines several responses to the first question, and suggests that lying violates morality as an excessive departure from the role-derived virtues of charity and justice: the liar wills another person the evil of false belief precisely in the proposition for which the speaker offers her assurance and takes special responsibility in asserting. So conceived, lying is an especially egregious form of treachery and degrading manipulation of another person. Appeal is then made to the gravity inherent in lying so conceived to suggest ways of answering the other questions which would support the traditional Augustinian claim that lying is inherently impermissible and ineligible in circumstances where other forms of deliberate deception may not be, and even in situations where violent attack may be permissible.

At the end, a taxonomy of more and less rigorist positions of lying is offered. A tentative proposal is made that, while consistent with the traditional Augustinian rigorist position that lying is always immoral, nevertheless has some features that may slightly soften that view's practical application. The proposed view does this in a way similar to that in which allowing moral dilemmas may soften it, for allowing dilemmas means there may be cases where an act of a type always immoral may still be more eligible than any alternative. However, it is maintained that the view here proposed need not countenance genuine dilemmas.

> "You said you'd told only two lies in your whole life. Dear young lady, isn't that rather a short allowance? I'm quite a straightforward man myself; but it wouldn't last me a whole morning."[2]

Thus, with admirable honesty, the charming, worldly Captain Bluntschli to hypocritical Raina in Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. We admire the honesty *with* which Bluntschli confesses, but mustn't we, to be consistent, condemn the *dishonesty to* which he confesses? Here we confront limits on any transvaluation in regard to lying.[3] If we follow this line of

thought far enough we approach the severe view attributed to Aquinas: "Lying likens a person to the devil, because a liar is as the son of the Devil. Now we know that a man's speech reveals the region and country of his origin . . . In the same way, some men are of the Devil's kind . . . sons of the Devil, [speaking as he does] since the Devil is . . . father of lies."[4]

We recognize ourselves in Captain Bluntschli. Lies constantly affront our ears and eyes and, indeed, are never far from our lips. This is not a good thing, to be sure, but what is wrong with lying? Is it always immoral? Or only most of the time? Can it be correct, as some have vigorously maintained, that lying is morally wrong in some circumstances where other forms of deliberate dissimulation are not? If so, how can that be? And how can it even be that lying to someone is immoral when other, harsher ways of treating her are permissible? These are among the questions with which I wish here to deal. My own leanings are to the rigorist position represented by Augustine, and my efforts are here directed to seeing what can be said in defense of such a position. In doing that, I shall from to time return to MacIntyre's suggestive treatment of these topics in his 1994 Tanner Lectures.

I. Lying, assertion, and deception

We should begin by clarifying our central notions. Deception is deceiving and I shall take deceiving someone to consist in inducing (or confirming) in her apprehension, impression, or belief that is not true or veridical. Thus, I intend to deceive you when I try to get you to come or continue to belief that *p* when I do not think *p* true. Similarly, illusionists of various stripes (*trompe l'oeil* painters, film- directors, stage designers, etc.) all commonly try to deceive, though the skeptical or sophisticated audience may well know that the impression created of the woman's having been sawn in two is false. Story-tellers and actors, in contrast, usually are not trying to deceive, though they may engage in that from to time, e. g., making it look as if this actor has struck that one. I shall here be concerned with intended deceptions and there, almost entirely with verbal ones.

Lying is asserting what one does not think true.[5] Asserting is a speech act, so only speech acts can be lies. In speech, one intends to communicate via the audience's recognizing that intent. Thus, exploiting the merely "natural significance" of behavior is not lying.

A tricks B into thinking A is going on a trip by (A's) leaving packed bags outside for B to see.[6]

Here, A does not lie, because a lie works by language and A does not employ language in deceiving B.

Assertions are always made *to* some audience, and likewise one may lie only to someone addressed. A does not address B, so A cannot have lied to B.

C sends a message to D but codes it with concealed negations, lest E intercept and read it. E intercepts the message, reads it, and as hoped is misled.

Again, C does not lie to E because C was not addressing E. It is true that, here, C had a conditional intent to deceive E. However, C asserted nothing to E. It is true but irrelevant that C carefully phrased what C asserted to D in order that it mislead E, should E, unaddressed, read it nevertheless.

F hides phoney messages, purportedly addressed to G, solely in hopes that H will find, read, and be misled by them.

Here, again, F does not address H and hence cannot lie to H. Although the messages are written solely for H's eyes, the deception works only by H's *correctly* thinking the messages are not *directed* to her. Of course, H also *incorrectly* thinks both that they are not *meant* for her and that they are meant for G, but that does not affect the issue about lying.

The content of an assertion is sometimes contextually limited or even fixed. Thus, a remark that is equivocal in abstraction from its context may not be equivocal in fact.

J, chasing K, catches up with K but, not recognizing her, asks K where K is. K replies, 'Not far off.' J stays to search the area while K slips away.

Here, what K asserts is what K knows to be the truth. So, K makes an intentionally misleading assertion to J, but it is not a lie. It may be held that it is nevertheless immoral, and even that it is immoral for the same reason lying is. Or someone may hold that it is not wrong, and neither would a lie be wrong in this circumstance. Or someone might hold that what J does is morally the same as lying, so that in any case where lying is wrong such intentional verbal deception is also wrong, and any case where this sort of intentional verbal deception is wrong, then lying is also wrong. I will return to the moral question below. However, talk of this act being 'morally the same' as lying is best avoided, since it runs together the question of moral covariation with the separate question of whether what J does in this case is a lie. It is only the latter I deny at this point. (Below, however, I give reasons for thinking this sort of deception may sometimes be permitted, though lying never is.)

Some have held that so-called mental reservations can change what would otherwise be an intentionally deceptive false assertion into something else.

L, a Catholic priest trying to conceal his status from a religious persecutor, M, tells M aloud 'I am not a priest' when asked. However, in saying this, L is careful "mentally [to] reserve" the complement phrase " . . . of Apollo."

I doubt this kind of effort to avoid lying can succeed. I suspect that *in this context* what L says (aloud) means 'I am not a Catholic priest' and the supposed mental reservation cannot suffice to fix either (i) the meaning of what M says or (ii) what M means as "I am not a priest of Apollo". The mental reservation does not change the meaning of what M says, because that is already relevantly fixed by the context of utterance. It does not even change what M means, I think, because what he means must be what he means to communicate. However, if M really meant to communicate to the audience that he is not Apollo's priest, then he surely would have chosen some better way of saying it. The only pertinent objection simply to saying 'I am not Apollo's priest', if that were what he meant to communicate, would be that this formulation succeeds too well in communicating that message. (It is not, after all, that the words are difficult to pronounce or that it would take too long.) However, if M counts it against a formulation that it clearly communicates that message, then that message is not what he means to communicate. Moreover, if M succeeded in communicating to his audience that he was not Apollo's priest then, he knows, they would realize that he might still be a priest of the sort that interests them, viz., a Catholic one. This makes me think that M does not mean or even want to communicate to his questioners that he is not a priest of Apollo. Indeed, M is trying *not* to communicate that to them, and one cannot sensibly try to do something one is also at the same time trying not to do. M, then, does not mean to communicate to this audience that he is not Apollo's priest and, therefore, that is not what he means when he says "I am not a priest.'

N, getting things ready for her daughter O's bedtime, asks whether O has brushed her teeth yet. O replies "Yes, I have brushed them," mentally reserving the specification " . . . at *some* time in the past, though not tonight."[7]

I think, again, the context fixes the meaning of O's oral remark as 'I have brushed them tonight,' and the mental reservations affect neither utterance-meaning nor speaker's meaning. Notice, after all, that O could have truthfully said 'No, I haven't brushed them,' and this would have been truthful because it would mean that she has not brushed *tonight*. However, if her saying 'I haven't brushed them' would mean that she has not done so tonight, then the negation of that affirmation should likewise mean that she *has* brushed them *tonight*. This leads me to conclude that, without further clarification (which O is careful not to add), O's reply in our original case asserts that she has not brushed tonight and is thus a false assertion, a lie.

Augustine held that "A lie consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving."[8] If that is to be accepted, then 'deceit' must be understood broadly. A speaker's intent to *engender* or *sustain* false belief may not be essential to false assertion. What does seem to be necessary is that she mean to lend testimonial *support* to possible false belief. To assert p is not so much to try to induce a belief that p as to offer grounds (perhaps superfluous) for believing p (or, at least, for believing that the speaker believes it).[9] Consider this interesting case:

P wishes to divorce Q in a place and time where divorce is granted only for adultery and where it has become commonplace for people to make and admit to false declarations of adultery in order to get their divorces approved. (Like New York State in the 1950s.) R, a judge angered by this casual and commonplace falsehood, presses P and Q, demanding details of the supposed adulteries just in order to humiliate and discomfit them by their telling further falsehoods. P and Q concoct and offer some details of their assignations' dates, location, etc.

Here, the tales that P and Q invent in response are false affirmations and appear to be lies. Yet they seem to involve no intent to induce false beliefs in those addressed (the general public?). Indeed, in this case, contrary to what Kemp and Sullivan require for assertion, there may be no reasonable expectation that P and Q will speak their minds.[10] Nonetheless, P and Q assert falsehoods and lie, for they must intend to give *some*body *some* grounds for accepting what they say. (Even if it is only people reading the record long after, and even if P and Q, concerned about their distant reputation among future generations, also hope that those people have stronger grounds for *dis*believing what they read). Whether it is essential to lying that there be a "reasonable expectation that the speaker [i.e., through her speech] will communicate her thoughts", like the question whether the one lied to must have a right to truthfulness, is a difficult matter I defer for now.

II. Intentional verbal deception without lying

The best account of verbal deception that we have, I think, is as a manipulation of Grice's "maxims" of conversation, which direct speakers to "cooperate" by making their linguistic contributions true and supportable ("maxims of quality"); clear, brief, and orderly ("maxims of manner"); relevant ("maxims of relation"); and neither too sparing nor too generous in informational detail ("maxims of quantity").

Thus, you can mislead people into thinking I am a frequent thief by truthfully telling someone, in the right context, that I haven't stolen anything "for weeks." (Here, the temporal qualification presents excessive detail and the listener, who assumes you are observing the conversational rules, and taking the qualification to contain necessary information, infers that I have stolen in the past.) Similarly, in a professional context (such as a job recommendation), I can deceive someone into judging your professional qualifications modest by pointedly praising only your manners and dress, in such a way that the listener, straining to see how in making these remarks I am observing the rules of relevance and truthfulness, infers that this is *all* I can truthfully say in your favor. People also mislead in a related way by saying too little, as in this one.

All S tells T about U's well-received recent presentation (which S attended and T missed) is that U's paper was nicely printed.[11]

Grice helps explain how true assertions can mislead. However, his account does not explain why such equivocations and comparable intentional deceptions are (i) normally immoral. More important, it does not explain why they are (ii) preferable to lies (when straightforwardness is to be avoided) and (iii) permissible in preference to lying. Indeed, since equivocal (and other similar) deceptions mislead by exploiting and violating conversational maxims of quantity or relation (or, perhaps, manner) and since, in Grice's original scheme, truthfulness is merely another maxim, it seems to make it *harder* to explain why lying is less eligible (and presumably is worse) than other verbal deceptions.

Fortunately, Grice later admits that "The maxim of Quality . . . does not seem to be just one among a number of recipes for producing contributions; it seems rather to spell out the difference between something's being, and (strictly speaking) failing to be, any kind of contribution at all. False information is not an inferior kind of information; it just is not information."[12] I think this revision does mark the key to progress. False assertion does not merely violate another conversational maxim, not even the most important one. Though many philosophers join Grice in thinking it a linguistic maxim, convention, or rule to assert only truths, lying violates more than just these norms.[13] It is immoral. It is often said that lying violates a moral rule. Rather than taking that well-trod route, I think it will prove helpful to articulate the immorality of lying by exploring the way in which lying is opposed to and distant from moral virtue. On that approach, if the Augustinian is right to think lying never permissible, and thus impermissible in cases where other deceptions are permitted, then lying must be distant from virtue, and therein violative of it, in ways that other deceptions (i) *need not be*, and (ii) *are* not in cases where one must choose between lying and otherwise intentionally misleading. How can that be?

III. What makes lying so wrong?

Augustinians usually hold that other misleading assertions are to be preferred to lying in cases where neither silence nor truth-telling is desirable. If this is so, then it must be that lying is wrong even when the other deceptions are not. The most appealing explanation for that wrongness is that lying is morally worse. But if so, what makes it worse? We should consider some suggestions.

a. Lying violates socially necessary norms of truthfulness and trust.
b. Lying goes against what one has vouched for in asserting it.
c. The speaker is less responsible for deception and the listener is more responsible for it in other deceptions than in lying.
d. Lying is breaking a pledge made in asserting.
e. Lying violates a right given a listener in asserting things to her.
f. Lying exploits the listener's weakness more gravely than do other deceptions.[14]
g. Lying perverts or betrays the relationship, or role (or, as I shall say, the 'sub-role') of information-giver, which someone, P1, occupies in the life of another, P2, however briefly and adventitiously, in virtue of P1's making assertions to P2.

Several of these suggestions are appealing, but problems also beset most of them.

Contra A: This is MacIntyre's view.[15] Unfortunately, it seems not well to explain why lying is wrong even in many small matters where the social consequences are likely to be negligible. Moreover, like Kant's explicit later position and that of Mill and others whom MacIntyre places in the "truth-tradition" (as distinct from the "trust-tradition"), this view does not explain why lying is wrong as an injustice that *wrongs the one lied to*. In this sort of explanation, the latter appears merely as a bit player, a locus rather than a victim. In a correct view, it is not the total consequences for society of my lie to you that makes it wrong. It is what I do to you in telling you a lie; it is what the lie is and means for the connection between you and me.

Contra B: It is somewhat silly to think I can meaningfully vouch for what I say. This would be an empty ceremony, like rising to voice agreement with one's own remarks, or adding 'Hear, hear!' to them. The idea of vouching for someone and her utterances is to add support to them, to provide others an additional reason to place credence in them. This crucial element is lost when one tries to make sense of vouching for one's own assertions.

Contra C: Ellin maintains that the listener has more of a hand in her deception when she makes a false inference from a true assertion than when she believes a false assertion.[16] This is probably true, but even if this lessens the speaker's causal responsibility for other deceptions (in comparison with lying), lessened *causal* responsibility does not always mean lessened *moral* responsibility. After all, it does not mitigate my offense if I get some accomplices to help me beat my enemy to death. Each of us would be as blameworthy as I would be alone if I had acted solo. In that respect, moral responsibility is not a zero-sum game. That difference from causal responsibility is fatal for this line of explanation.

Contra D: The view that lying violates a special implicit pledge made in asserting is promising for explaining why lying can be wrong when other deliberate deceptions are not.[17] However, putting the point this way seems overstated, overdramatic, and problematic in several ways.

- It requires us to say that we make an extraordinary number of pledges during our most trivial affairs.
- It makes solemn affairs like vows trivial by reducing them to mere redundancies, cases of making explicit what is already known to be implicit.
- Ordinarily, in assertion, there seems to be no such thing as uptake, the acceptance of the promise *essential* to *real* promising, on the part of the listener.[18]

On E: The view that lying violates a right to truth has been widely maintained in what MacIntyre calls the "trust-tradition", i. e., the group of thinkers who hold that what makes lying wrong, when it is wrong, is that it violates the trust of the person lied to. These thinkers have also usually held the anti-Augustinian position that lying is not always wrong, sometimes specifying that it is not wrong when the person lied to has no right to the truth. Chisholm and Feehan explain the wrong-

ness of lying in terms of such a right. That lying violates a right is implied by, but does not itself imply, F, discussed below.

Those in the rights-oriented "trust-tradition" need not hold that lying is unique in the way it violates rights. However, this approach seems attractive, since it leaves its advocate room to take the position that certain other forms of deception may violate those rights less grievously. (Or, better, that the moral presumption against other deceptions as rights violations may be weaker, leaving them easier to justify.) However, on reflection, this position sounds overly formal, legalistic. More important, it may not go deep enough. What is the source of these rights? What is their nature? If violating a right is an all or nothing affair, how can we explain the way in which a lie is worse than other deceptions and how they, but not it, can sometimes be justified despite the right? For Augustinians, it is also dangerous, for it threatens to justify lying to people who are deemed not to have a right to the truth. (Although, of course, it *need* not be given this application.)[19] What is important for the Augustinian to deny is that someone could acquire what Kant called a "right to lie."

On F: Ellin thinks the cost of protecting oneself against lying (especially, by adopting a rule restraining oneself in believing what people assert) is greater than that of protecting oneself against false inference (by adopting a rule restraining oneself in making inferences from what they assert). There seems to be some truth to this. Perhaps it does help to explain the (greater) gravity of lying. Perhaps this notion of the liar's exploiting the listener's weakness can be seen as a part of what I explicate below as the liar's special betrayal of a trust-relation into which the speaker manipulates the listener. This betrayal is more direct and more grave than that involved even in other purposely misleading assertions, because it misleads precisely in what one asserts, and therefore precisely *in* what the listener is assured she can rely upon. The lie mis*informs* where other deceptions only *mislead*. Still, this notion, like that of rights to the truth, needs grounding in a fuller moral theory or vision of the moral life.

On G: I think this approach can be elaborated in such fashion as to provide some glimpse of the kind of moral theory that might do the needed work. I shall next briefly sketch certain type of larger normative moral theory. This should also capture the insights motivating approaches C, D, E, and F. The liar is especially responsible (morally, not causally) she takes responsibility in asserting a proposition *p*. (Compare C above.) She can therefore be said to violate the residual right to (be told the) truth that she gives someone, even an evildoer, in the act of making an assertion to the latter. (Compare E above.) In this way, she places the one lied to in a disadvantaged position by assuring the latter of her truthfulness and then exploiting any trust invested in her. (Compare F above.) This is, in some ways, morally like a pledge in that it increases the agent's responsibility and limits the range of permissible deviation/shortfall from a specific form of conduct given special moral significance by the agent's own behavior. (Compare D above.)

IV. Lying and deception within a virtues-based, roles-centered, p atient-focused conception of moral life.

In several papers I have tried to articulate and begin to develop an approach to moral theory that is virtues-based, role-centered, and patient-focused.[20] In its account of the wrong-making features of action, it is also what I call input-driven. Here, my summary shall provide only the bare skeleton.

The theory is virtues-based in that it treats concepts and claims about what is morally virtuous as more basic conceptually than concepts and claims about what is impersonally valuable or what is morally required. Rather, on this approach, we explain something's having impersonal value (e. g., it being good that you are healthy) in terms of its being morally virtuous for anyone in general to want or intend or otherwise to favor it. And we explain something's being forbidden, morally wrong, its violating a moral rule, etc., in terms of its being distant from and opposed to virtue so to behave. In this way, the account of an action's being right or wrong morally can be said to be input-driven, for it maintains that an action's deontic status is determined by its virtue status, and its virtue status (whether it is, for example, kind or cruel) must be a matter of the action's motivational inputs.

There are, of course, various qualifiers and clarifications that need to be added to these bald statements, but they serve to convey what distinguishes the central approach. For on this view, it should now be clear, the notions of impersonal value and moral duty, often seen as central to consequentialist and neo-Kantian approaches respectively, both derive from a prior account of the morally virtuous. This sort of virtues-based view is virtue ethics with a bite, what Kurt Baier has nicely called "radical virtue ethics", since it cannot be grafted onto more familiar modern theoretical conceptions.

What, then, is the morally virtuous? What makes one thing and not another to be virtuous? Again, I shall have to content myself with only the most cursory outline, but the core idea is that a virtue is a trait that counts towards someone's being good in one or another of certain personal role-relationships. We can call these role-relationships 'morally determinative' since a person's being morally virtuous is a matter of her having what it takes to be good in one of these roles and, as we saw, other principal moral-theoretic concepts—such as those of a state of affair's having impersonal value or an action's being morally required—are explained in terms of moral virtue. What these role-relationships are we have a good intuitive idea about: the list must surely include such relationships as those of spouse, friend, confidant, fellow within a community, and what Christians call 'neighbor', which applies to anyone insofar as she is conceived as somehow a fellow traveler in life's journey. More important, a person's having these and similar relationships fulfilled in her life is understood in this view as partially constitutive of her having a good life—her life is good to the extent that it contains a good spousal relationship, good friends, good confidants, and so on. Thus, these relationships are seen as possessing a significance that is not mere-

ly instrumental. For me to flourish is, among other things, for my friends to be loyal to me, my spouse devoted to me, my confidants faithful to me, my 'neighbors' well-disposed toward me, and so on. It is, thus, the internal disposition of each person occupying one of these roles that makes her good, virtuous, in it. In this way, the theory's role-centeredness jibes with its character as virtues-based.

These elements also reveal its patient-focus. We can call this approach patient-focused, because what makes my personal attitudes (and, derivatively, the actions to which they give rise) virtuous or vicious is a matter of how they help me to fulfill the pertinent role-relationships I occupy in the lives of various persons. And, in turn, whether they fulfill those relationships is a matter of whether, in having them, I live up to what those in whose lives I occupy those roles need and benefit from in having them filled. So, my caring about you makes me, so far forth, to be a good friend to you because it constitutes a part of your having a flourishing human life. (Of course, that I provide you with a constituent of a flourishing life does not mean that in fact you have a have flourishing life *tout court*. That takes more than one component.) What is important for our purposes is that what makes my devotion to you morally virtuous (that is, good-making, here understood as making me good-in-a-pertinent-role-to-you, making me your-good-*R*) is your need, your flourishing, your benefiting, your having a good life. This is the way in which the approach focuses on the patient—not on the agent, but on the recipient of the agent's attention. For this reason too, the central evaluations in this approach are neither "hypothetical" in the sense in which Kant said some "imperatives" were—i. e., derived from the agent's interests, nor "categorical" in the sense (perhaps a bit broader than Kant's) of being independent of anyone's interests, needs, flourishing, or happiness.[21] This approach, then, treats the 'moral pull' of your interests as irreducible to my interests and not derived from them, which nicely fits our pretheoretical intuitions about the matter. Although I will not pursue the matter here, it also holds potential for explaining why this 'moral pull' is differentially distributed across persons relative to some subject in such a way that it may be vicious of me to treat one person in ways it will not be vicious of me to treat someone differently related to me.[22]

This summary also reveals what I called the 'input-drive' that distinguishes its account of right and wrong action. Input-drive is different from, and stronger than, mere input-*sensitivity*. An account of right action is input-sensitive when such motivational inputs as intentions can affect an action's deontic status along with other, independent factors.[23] It is also stronger than input-*determination*, where, as in forms of motive utilitarianism, an act is made right by its motives, but the motives may themselves be made good/virtuous by the general effects of having them (or cultivating them or whatever). Rather, input-drive means that an action's rightness or wrongness is determined by the moral value of its motivational inputs, where their value is not derived from the independent impersonal value status of some states of affairs nor from the independent deontic status of some actions.

Within such an approach how can moral quandaries be decided? Rashdall suggested that the thing to do in such circumstances is the more virtuous action.[24] I think that will not do, but it is close to the mark. It will not do because it may well be that giving a gift to person *A* is more virtuous than paying a debt to *B*, yet it is the debt that is to be paid rather than the gift made when both cannot be done. Still, Rashdall is on to something. Let us instead say that a serious moral conflict should be settled by determining and choosing the course of action that requires and embodies the lesser deviation from virtue, the lesser falling short of the mark set by virtue. I won't try here to elaborate a case for input-drive, nor defend it against objections.[25] On this account, morality is fundamentally a phenomenon of heart, actions and their effects matter only derivatively as indicators of a well-disposed heart.

V. Lies and other deceptions.

Now, we can apply this to the more particular matter of the ethics of lying and other intentionally deceptive assertion. In asserting, one occupies (i. e., one either enters or remains in) a special relation-within-a-relation with those addressed. Asserting does not seem to be a sufficiently deep or long-lived affair itself to count as a morally determinative role-relationship, but it is a modular 'sub-role', as a shall call it: one which can occur within many role-relationships that collectively compose the moral life. Making assertions, serving as information-provider, is a realm and status of moral significance within many full-fledged roles—friend, confidante, fellow citizen, etc.[26] For that reason, to be a bad information-giver, below standard in that sub-role, counts heavily towards one failing/falling short/ being bad in those roles.[27] That is because this sub-role has standards of moral virtue from which all intentional deceptions depart and which lies betray in an especially egregious way. In making an assertion to someone S, one occupies the sub-role of information-giver vis-a-vis her, a sub-role whose very name indicates the conduct and the goal pursuit of which constitutes being virtuous and behaving virtuously (toward S) in that sub-role. Insofar as human flourishing in part consists precisely in having people occupy and discharge such a relation to oneself (according to the theory I sketched above), a person's discharging or failing in this sub-role, her being good or bad in it, counts towards her being good or bad in one or more larger, morally-determinative role, and thus toward her morally good or bad, morally virtuous or vicious.

One can fail, fall short, in this station in various ways: e. g., (i) not taking care about whether what one asserts—even if true—might lead to false inferences, (ii) not taking care about whether what one asserts is itself true, (iii) asserting something true in order to mislead third-parties (who eavesdrop or to whom reports filter down) into inferring false beliefs, (iv) asserting something true in order to mislead those addressed into inferring false beliefs, (v) asserting something false in order to mislead those addressed into a false belief precisely in what is asserted. The last (v) is a lie (of the most familiar sort), and is plainly at the greatest

remove from the information-giver's (sub-role-)task of informing another truthfully. Other deceptions mis*lead* but only lies really mis*inform*.

Our suggestion implies that lying is an especially egregious form of deception, and thus deeply offends against honesty. This is not only compatible with, it *implies*, that deception is objectionable and requires special justification. To pick out lying as a special wrong is not to excuse or endorse other forms of deception. Quite the contrary. Nevertheless, we want to ask two questions. (a) Why should duplicity be less objectionable when it is carried out without lying? (b) How can it be permissible morally for me to assert p to you, which I think true, in order that you infer q, which I think false, but wrong for me just to assert q to you flat out?

Let us begin with (a). Our view implies that purposive deception is objectionable, it is presumptively vicious. However, we should be careful about just what purposive deception is. To say something (or to withhold saying it) (i) *without* intending that one's listener L *have* (or, at least, be supported in) the true belief that p, is different from saying it (ii) *with* the intention that L *not have* the true belief that p, and different also from saying it (iii) *with* the intention that L have the *false* belief that not-p. Only (iii) counts as an intentionally deceptive assertion, and it is deception that someone intends in lying. Note that (iii) is further removed from the virtue of truthfulness than is (ii), and, thus, more vicious. Note also that (i) is not opposed to truthfulness at all. Perhaps (i) will sometimes indicate a lack of candor, but candor is no moral virtue, and it is a serious moral danger. Its danger lies in the facts that frankness encourages insensitivity to the effects of one's statements and that it breeds shamelessness as people more often (and thus more causally) admit to things of which they should be ashamed. This latter phenomenon helps breed either grotesque 'pride'-movements, or a therapeutic culture in which doing appalling things is thought normally to be blameless because the acts are presumed to be merely manifestation of the agent's illness or her own past victimization (of which no one should be ashamed).[28]

That leaves us with our second question, (b) How can it be permissible morally for me to assert p to you, which I think true, in order that you infer q, which I think false, but wrong for me just to assert q to you flat out? Even if lying is worse than some other forms of intentional deception, why are those other forms still not sufficiently far removed from (and opposed to) virtue—i. e., why are they not so vicious—that they are themselves always impermissible?

MacIntyre, unfortunately, provides little answer. He speaks admiringly of the duplicitous ingenuity of some who thought up clever ways to mislead others without quite lying to them.[29] He sees failure to think up such devices "as evidence of our own or someone else's lack of wit, ingenuity and foresight, itself an important kind of moral failure." (p. 23) However, this judgment invites objection on at least two grounds. First, it gives the quick-witted a moral advantage over the dull, raising concern about what philosophers call "constitutive moral luck."[30] Second, it seems to encourage and privilege a kind of duplicity that appears closer to moral vice than virtue. Nevertheless, I think neither objection decisive. That some constitutive luck matters morally may just

be a fact of moral life, which our theories need to limit but not deny. Moreover, it is also a fact that, people being the way we are, there are some truths it is important to keep hidden, and shrewdness in doing this may be something like a moral virtue, and not an unimportant one at that. So, MacIntyre's claims are vindicated. Still, a difficulty remains, for the fact that deception sometimes has advantages does not suffice to show it is sometimes permissible. [31]

It will not do to explain this simply by pointing out that lies are morally worse. For, the fact that there are some forms of action available to an agent which are worse than option *O* does not suffice to show that *O* is itself morally permissible. ('Yes, I killed her from spite; but my doing so was not wrong, because, after all, I didn't torture her first, which I could have done.')

Still, this approach, while misguided, is not entirely wrong-headed. Perhaps the answer lies in the sub-role of information-giver. It is always relativized to some particular pieces of information—i. e., to specific propositions. An agent has not entirely betrayed that role so long as that proposition she asserts is not itself both (1) false and (2) uttered with the agent's intent of supporting the audience in a false belief precisely in it.

Maybe it is the limited nature of the violation of role-duty, best understood as distance from the norm of role-virtue, that allows that, in extreme circumstances, these intentional deceptions, while they are presumptively vicious forms of behavior, may nonetheless prove minimally acceptable morally. On a virtues-based view of the sort taken here, the question of whether intentionally deceptive assertion (without lying) is ever permissible becomes whether, in truthfully asserting with the intention to deceive, the agent always acts badly in her role, acts from a motivational input excessively removed from that which constitutes virtue in it. (Though we should admit that it remains to be determined just how far is too far.)

It might seem that the motivational input to intentionally deceptive assertion is always, cannot but be, so distant from the virtue of veracity that the agent always acts badly as an *R* in so behaving. However, the matter is more intricate than it might at first appear. That is because the status of information-giver is probably not itself a morally-determinative role. As we observed above, it may be too limited in scope, too short-lived, and perhaps just too instrumental for that. It seems to engage too little of the person who occupies it. So, while the intentionally deceptive assertion makes the agent a bad information-giver (i. e., bad in the sub-role of information-giver), it may nonetheless be that she is not therein acting badly in the larger role itself. It is the latter, however, that determines her (and her action's) morality. Remember, too, that, in making assertions, we have said someone occupies the sub-role of information-provider, but that the crucial information (her commitment to the other's having which constitutes her virtue or vice) is specifically that proposition she asserts. Thus, a speaker, *S*, offends less directly and therein less seriously against that role when she seeks to mislead the person she addresses, *A*, into believing some *q* when she asserts *p* than she does when she seeks to mislead *A* into believing *p* itself. For it is *S*'s commitment to A's having the truth about what she asserts—*p* itself—that is

central to *S*'s being good in her sub-role of *A*'s information-provider. That is why to engage in deception *about some other proposition* is to mislead, but not really to misinform.

In contrast, it is reasonable to hold that lying makes the agent so bad as an information-giver, is so irredeemably distant in its motivational input from that called for in fulfilling the sub-role of information-giver, that it must also therein make her to be acting badly in the larger role—the morally determinative one (be it friend, fellow citizen, or simply fellow human being) that she occupies and to which her status as information-giver is subordinated. My lie to you may not suffice itself to make me a bad friend (or fellow citizen, or neighbor, etc.), but it does mean that I have *acted badly* as a friend (etc.).

By the way, we should note that the kind of virtues-based approach taken here should help put to rest the silly idea that virtues-based moral theory cannot accommodate anything like moral rules. We can easily allow at least three uses for that notion. (i) Someone with the virtue of honesty will make it her rule not to lie and to try avoid other (especially, verbal) deceptions. (ii) We can say that there is a moral rule against lying as a way of saying that lying always violates the virtue of honesty (or, at least, manifests a motivational state at some worrisome remove from it, i.e., it is always vicious). (iii) Finally, Christians also believe that God has underscored and enforced the viciousness of lying by giving us a command forbidding it. We can understand that command as constituting or creating a moral rule against lying. In any event, in a virtues-based theory, the fundamental moral importance of lying lies in the fact that it runs contrary to virtue, it is vicious.

VI. Lies and other attacks.

How can a lie be morally wrong in some cases of liar-betrayer predicaments, although violent, even homicidal, defensive attack need not be wrong in them?[32] Aquinas dealt with just this puzzle in an objection to his own view that lying is always sinful:

> Further, one ought to choose the lesser evil in order to avoid the greater: even so a physician cuts off a limb, lest the whole body perish. Yet less harm is done by raising a false opinion in a person's mind than by someone slaying or being slain. Therefore a man may lawfully lie, to save another from committing murder, or another from being killed."[33]

This applies as well to defensively slaying the would-be murderer as to her slaying her victim. Aquinas's response is, in part, that "a lie is evil in respect of its genus...[in that] words are naturally signs of intellectual acts, [and so] it is unnatural and undue for anyone to signify by words something that is not in his mind." He continues,

> A lie is sinful not only because it injures one's neighbor, but also on account of its inordinateness...Now it is not allowed to make use of anything inordinate in order to ward off injury or defects from

> another...Therefore it is not lawful to tell a lie in order to deliver another from any danger whatever. Nevertheless, it is lawful to hide the truth prudently, by keeping it back..."[34]

Contrary to what Aquinas says, on the role-centered view taken here, the 'inordinateness' he finds in the lie consists in the contrariety of the action's motivational input to the sort of motivation someone in the neighbor's position needs for the information-giver to live up to the spirit of her role. So, the inordinateness *consists in* and *constitutes* an injury to the neighbor, even if it *causes* her no *further* harm. If the lie is always and essentially wrong, then it must be because it always and essentially wrongs the one lied to. In this way, it seems to me, what MacIntyre calls the "truth-tradition" on lying must collapse into something like what he calls the "trust-tradition". For the signal wrong of my lying to someone *P* is that I betray a relationship of trust (better, a sub-relationship or, as I have said, a 'sub-role') that my assertion establishes or ratifies between her and me. The truth that can be a virtue, after all, is *devotion* to truth, that is, truthfulness. What the truthful person wants for herself and others is that they possess the *human* good of correct beliefs about the pertinent matters. She pursues and is devoted to the good of truth, to be sure. However, she seeks it not as a detached, Platonic Form, but a characteristic of human beliefs and apprehensions. What is crucial, then, is not exactly trust itself, though the person with the virtue of truthfulness will likely be appreciated as trustworthy. What is more central is the relationship between persons. That is the insight better articulated in the emphasis on 'trust' than in abstract talk of 'truth'. In asserting *p* to you, I present myself as someone for you to trust (on *p* itself, at least). It is this personal connection, this 'sub-role', that I establish and offer you in making the assertion, and that I also betray in an especially egregious way when I act with intentions diametrically opposed to what I should intend when so connected to you: specifically, the intent that you possess the truth on *p*, which intention would count towards my fulfilling my part of the connection that I offer. That is to say, I betray you in this when I lie and that is the germ of truth in the claims we examined earlier that the liar establishes and exploits a weakness in the listener, that the liar makes and violates a pledge to the latter, that the liar confers on her listener a special right that she breaches at the same time.

Where the so-called "trust-tradition" goes astray, I think, is in inadequately appreciating that what is crucial morally is the liar's distance from the intentions consonant with the connection she establishes in making an assertion and that would make her worthy of trust. Of greater practical import, it goes astray in the related tendency, not inherent in the approach but common there, to view various false assertions (whether or not a particular thinker classifies them as lies) as morally permissible. Many of those who invoke trust as the basis of their condemnation of lying think lying permissible when the person addressed has done something bad, or simply when the agent has more important things to attend to than being trustworthy. That is wrong-headed. The wrongdoer may not deserve to be trusted, but that fact cannot give some

other person a right to be untrustworthy. That is because being untrustworthy is already and essentially to be vicious in a certain way. My wrongdoing may license you in doing some things to me not otherwise licit. However, to betray a trust is to treat another with treachery and therein to degrade her.[35] It takes a cynical, cold heart to say that even wrongdoers deserve such debasement.

How, then, can it be wrong to lie to someone whom it would not be wrong physically to attack? What we have just said suggests one promising line of explanation, though I cannot say I expect it to persuade minds corrupted by our modern casualness about truthfulness. We can begin by observing limits on even defensive attacks. There are several things that would be seriously objectionable to do to the (would-be) aggressor in a liar-betrayer predicament, even if done in defense of the one endangered: e.g., attacking the aggressor's family, humiliating her, abusing her sexually, spreading lies about her. All these would be wrong, even if they were the only ways to save some, because they degrade the aggressor or manipulate her. While the aggressor's rights against attack may be weakened or even nullified by her misconduct, she retains *some* human rights. To degrade or manipulate is to treat with contempt, and contempt is an indignity and therefore a violation of the dignity and respect that ground human rights. The aggressor does not lose her humanity or the status which her humanity confers; so, she may not be treated in such ways.

A case can be made that lying does just this. According to MacIntyre, proponents of the trust-tradition emphasize the relationship between the liar and the lied to, but have been quick to assume that no trust-relationship can exist in liar-betrayer predicaments, usually rejecting Augustine's view that lying is always immoral. Perhaps they have been too quick in this assumption. If the view I have suggested is defensible, then what I have (adapting Kemp and Sullivan) called 'liar-betrayer predicaments' are really *betrayer*-betrayer predicaments: the agent either betrays the whereabouts of the innocent or betrays the trust relation she connivingly offers to her pursuers.

MacIntyre acknowledges that lying is a type of betrayal and distortion of a relationship, and is wrong because of that. "And you know that I know that you know you that what I will have discovered if I discover you in an untruth, or vice versa, is that you have to a greater or lesser degree *defected from our relationship*. Lies then become understood, as they should be, as small or large betrayals..."[36] He also sees the virtue of truthfulness as one that holds within relationships. "...[T]he evil of lying then consists in its capacity for corrupting and destroying the integrity of rational relationships."[37] And, again, "This rule [against lying] is one to be followed, whatever the consequences, and it is a rule for all rational persons, *as persons in relationships*."[38] Of course, MacIntyre does not draw from all this the same conclusions I do.

While the *cost* to the innocents is greater—since they may lose their lives if they are found out—the *depth* of betrayal is arguably worse if a lie is told; for then the agent lures the aggressor with assurances that she can depend on the agent in this respect, all the while planning the dou-

ble-cross on that very matter. (I.e., the lie.) I don't say that the lie is clearly the more repugnant choice morally. But this analysis does reveal difficulties in the smug assumption of recent moralists that Kant was plainly wrong. We know there are some things it would be wrong to do even to would-be aggressors, and I hope the view suggested here—that the liar sinks so low as to offer the would-be aggressor a trust relation in order to set up its betrayal—brings lying closer to some of them. As the recent Catholic Catechism says, "Lying is the most direct offense against the truth . . . It is a profanation of speech, whereas the purpose of speech is to communicate known truth to others. The deliberate intention of leading a neighbor into error by saying things contrary to the truth constitutes a failure in justice and charity."[39] Whether or not it is true that "speech" has *any* single purpose, as some medievals thought (let alone one as narrow as communicating "known truth to others"), there is an end to which one commits oneself in making an assertion, and that is to support the good of true belief *in* those one addresses, *on* the proposition one asserts. It is this virtuous (good-making) pursuit against which the liar offends in an especially egregious way when she lies, by acting with intentions diametrically opposed to the ones that are virtuous (that is, good-making) in her sub-role as information-provider.

If lying is an especially direct offense against truthfulness, and therefore, moreover, a special sin against the justice and charity owed to the one lied to, then it may also be a more direct offense against even a malevolent listener to lie to her than it is an offense against those hiding not to do everything one could to save them. The latter is a presumptive offense of non-benevolence against those found (as a result of principled silence or failed trickery), an indirect offense against charity and justice, whereas the former is a direct effort to impede the one lied to from getting the truth about what is asserted. The former may be worse in roughly the way Aquinas thought *transgressio* generally worse than *omissio*: it is more 'distant' from the good (i.e., from virtue).

My view does not wholly coincide with the Augustinian tradition, however, even though it is meant to help explain and justify that tradition's absolutist stand against lies. Aquinas is quite explicit that a lie is, as such, only "venial sin," a comparatively small moral offense.[40] It is hard to see why what is normally only a small offense remains any offense at all when it is the only available way to avoid what would normally be a grave offense (e.g., betraying the innocent to their enemies). Strictly speaking, of course, venial sins are merely those God does not punish by damnation, and my philosophical view can remain silent on this theological matter. However, Aquinas and others within the tradition think lying normally only venial sin *because* of its supposed 'parvity of matter', i. e., it is not sufficiently serious morally. Thus, Aquinas says a lie becomes mortal sin when it involves more serious things. The view suggested here indicates that every lie as such offends in a deep way against charity and justice and that is *why* it cannot be justified.[41] In my view, the liar acts with ill will inasmuch as she means to seduce her audience into a relationship of trust and dependence for purposes of betraying it. Recall that, while Dante largely follows Aquinas' moral

system, he reserves the lowest circle of Hell for those who sin by treachery. (Of course, whether God chooses to punish liars with Hell, in any circle, is beyond my competence to say.)

The wrongfulness of lying may be intrinsic to it, then, in such a way that even "benevolent motives" cannot render it licit. A final conjecture. Perhaps there is, after all, something to the view, taken by Kant, Augustine, and Aquinas, that the liar degrades herself as well as her intended audience. This is not *necessary* to explain why lying is vicious/wrong, nor is this even the chief source of the lie's immorality. Nevertheless, it would be seriously objectionable, and arguably unjustifiable, for the agent to do some things to herself in defense of those endangered. Degrading herself in various ways (for example, by performing public sex acts by herself, or with animals, or with groups of others, for the amusement of the aggressors) would be base. Perhaps the insight toward which MacIntyre's truth-tradition groped was that to turn oneself into a liar even for a good cause would be similar debasing or "shameful." This was Augustine's view, and it is not altogether implausible.[42] Insofar as life is, as many think, essentially a quest for various truths (or even, for The Truth), then all commerce with deception, and especially embracing falsehood as if it were a good thing to be offered to others, must render more difficult one's essential relationship with the truth.

VII. Lies, options, and dilemmas.

Let me conclude by trying out another idea, one about which I am quite hesitant. Perhaps, the woman in the liar-betrayer dilemma ought to lie rather than tell the truth about the innocents—she does better to lie—in the sense that lying, though wrong, might nonetheless be the morally preferable immoral course. This is not to admit that she is in a moral dilemma, not even in perplexity *secundum quid*, in the sense in which von Donagan and von Wright use that term in their interpretations of Aquinas.[43] Rather, it allows that there is something else that the agent could and should have done (viz. trying a certain way of deceiving without lying), which would have been morally permissible. However, it may be that, of the remaining impermissible alternatives, lying is the morally preferable (less immoral) course.[44] That lying is always wrong (even if telling the truth about the innocents is not always wrong) does not imply that it may not be a preferable alternative when either of these choices is impermissible and when the agent chooses not to try the permissible alternative—perhaps because she is rightly afraid that she *will* not succeed in pulling it off (even if, in some sense, she *could*).

The final parenthetical matters because it distinguishes the case I have in mind from one where the speaker is so shaken, or frightened, or whatever that she *cannot* bring herself to execute the cool, non-lying deception. If she cannot, then it is not really an alternative at all, let alone the sole morally permissible alternative. I think that, in that case, we Augustinians have to bite the bullet and say the lie would still be impermissible and so silence (even one likely to lead to all the innocents being killed) alone permissible, for the lie is a deeper betrayal of someone than is the silence a betrayal (or other

moral failing) of anyone. To be sure, the lie betrays a less admirable party, but if she doesn't *deserve* to be lied to (and it is doubtful anyone can deserve that), then what entitles the liar to lie? In any case, how can she (or we) ever be adequately certain that some cool deception short of a lie would be (or would have been) impossible for her? Why think that such no-third-option-cases ever escape ethics seminar rooms into the external world? My suspicion is that such speculations may prove helpful in retrospective assessment, but are of little use in practical (and, thus, prospective) deliberation.

Frankfurt reminds us that lying is all around us, and that we learn to adjust.[45] That is surely true. Our politics is full of dissimulation, as we debase the high-minded language of 'choice,' 'autonomy,' 'rights,' and 'dignity' to mask the resurgence of ancient abominations. We tell ourselves that some lies are justified, and we don't feel so bad about our many everyday lies.[46] Perhaps we should. We do not look so bad in Captain Bluntschli's mirror, but there may be a room upstairs that offers a truer portrait—one like Dorian Gray's. We liars may come to suspect that Aquinas had a point after all when we study *that* image, and recognize in ourselves our father's features.

Taxonomical addendum

On the absoluteness of lying, there are three principal camps. (1) Rejectionists (e.g., most post-Kantian philosophers) deny all lying is immoral and hold that many of the controversial cases are lies but permissible ones. (2) Revisionists (or Re-conceptualizers) maintain that all lies are immoral, but re-conceive lying so that such controversial cases as Kant's liar-betrayer predicament are neither lies nor immoral. Unfortunately, these revisions tend to be either (i) unconvincing in their re-definitions of lying—as is Donagan's claim that lying requires a "free" (uncoerced?) assertion,[47] or (ii) unclear in their application to some of the controversial cases—as are the claims that lying must violate a right to the truth (Grotius, the Catechism of the Catholic Church) or that lying occurs only when there is reasonable expectation of the truth (Kemp & Sullivan). (3) Bullet-Biters accept the Augustinian claim that lying is always wrong and apply to condemn false statements in cases like Kant's. However, one should acknowledge a sub-group of Bullet-Sweeteners here. Bullet-Sweeteners hold that lying is always an immoral choice, but not thereby necessarily always an ineligible choice. Friends of moral dilemmas (FOMDs) are one class of Bullet-Sweetener, when they think that there are occasions in which all an agent's choices may be immoral, and lying could be the best of a bad lot. The view I sketched, somewhat noncommittally, at the end of this essay is also a Bullet-Sweetener approach: it holds that (a) lying as conceived without the Revisionists' special conditions is never permissible (that is what makes it a Bullet-Biter position), and also that (b) there is always *some* morally preferable and permissible alternative to lying (that is what distinguishes it from the position of the FOMDs), but adds that (c) lying may still be preferable to those alternatives that the agent actually manages to think of or is willing to risk.

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NOTES

1. I am grateful to Princeton University and Alasdair MacIntyre for inviting me to contribute comments on MacIntyre's Tanner Lectures there in 1994, to Quentin Skinner and the other panelists and audiences on that occasion, to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong for a vigorous critique of my developing views, and to Christopher Kaczor and other members of audiences at Notre Dame's 1996 Summer Institute in Thomistic Studies and at Valparaiso and Calvin College for comments on an another version of this material. I am also grateful to Linda Zagzebski and the editors of *Faith and Philosophy* for inviting my contribution to the symposium on virtue.
2. Shaw (1952), Act III, p. 55.
3. On the limits of transvaluation, see Foot's essay "Nietzsche," in Foot (1978).
4. Aquinas (1992), p. 68. The reference is to John 8:44: "You are of your father the devil, . . . there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."
5. This is what I shall mean in this essay when I talk of 'false assertions'. What matters is not whether the proposition is, in fact, true, but whether the speaker thinks it true when she asserts it.
6. The examples I offer in this paper largely derive from the literature and from conversation. Some are fancies of philosophers or theologians medieval or later; some are historical, some legendary. I shall not identify a source nor supply historical context for each. Rich sources include Kant, Kemp and Sullivan (1993), Geach (1977), and MacIntyre (1995).
7. I acknowledge (but am not exactly grateful to) my son Rafael for experientially introducing me to an example all too similar to this one. O's name and gender have been changed to protect the guilty.
8. Approvingly quoted at the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sec. 2482.
9. If I read it correctly, this is the implication of Grice's account of meaning, which works on the speaker's intent to communicate something about her beliefs. See Grice (1989), esp. chaps. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and Epilogue.
10. Kemp and Sullivan (1993) claim that for someone to make an assertion there must be an expectation of her telling the truth. However, they do not specify just who should have this expectation, under what circumstances, whether it is meant normatively or counterfactually (that is, as a claim about what should or would be expected rather than about what is), how strong the expectation must be, nor (most important) just why such expectation is needed for assertion.
11. I will not pursue the details of which true assertions mislead by violating just which Gricean maxims. This is, in fact, a somewhat tricky matter.
12. Grice (1989), p. 371.
13. MacIntyre (1995) cites Lewis, Johansen and Stenius, and it not difficult to think of others.
14. Suggestions (b), (c), (d), and (f) come from Ellin, though he may not in the end endorse them all. (See Ellin.)
15. MacIntyre (1995).
16. Ellin (1988).
17. Ellin (1988), p. 133.
18. I am grateful to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong for presenting this line of critique to me in conversation and helping me see its force.

19. Thus, I find troubling the formulation in the new Catechism of the Catholic Church: "To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead into error someone who has the right to know the truth." (CCC 2483) One wonders whether the last clause is meant restrictively, so that some have no right to the truth and may licitly have false assertions made to them. (Though, notice, implausibly, these would not then count as lies by this formulation.) It is not clear what sort of "act[ing] against the truth" that is not also speaking against the truth is meant to count as lying. Nodding or shaking one's head, it seems to me, should count. However, these are moves within a language, even if they are not verbal, so it is not clear that they are episodes of acting as distinct from speaking. Thus, such acts as those do not require adding the disjunctive phrase 'or act' to the formula. What, then, does? What is that addition meant for? For that matter, we need some clarification here as to whether it is logically excluded that I lie to someone already in error about a matter and whom my false assertions cannot therefore "lead into" it.

20. See, inter alia, Garcia (1986, 1987, 1990), and, especially, Garcia (1998).

21. This theory does allow that there can be essentially self-regarding role-relationships that are, nonetheless, morally constitutive in the sense that someone's or something's being morally good, virtuous, dutiful, forbidden, etc. is always to be understood in terms of these roles. So, it would be more accurate to say that it allows that *most* moral evaluations are not 'hypothetical', not derived from the agent's own interests. Such self-regarding roles and evaluations are not my focus here, so I shall not be picky about that qualification.

22. Christina Hoff Sommers has stressed the differential quality of what Nozick called the 'moral pull' that other people's value exerts on my attitudes and actions. (Nozick wanted to distinguish this 'moral pull' from the "moral push" which, he claimed, a person's own value exerts on her and her behavior.)

23. See Garcia (1995) for defenses of input-sensitivity against the claim that an agent's intentions are irrelevant to whether she acts permissibly.

24. On Rashdall, see Scarre (1996), p. 121: "In Rashdall's view, then, considerations of virtue trump all other considerations, and moral dilemmas should be resolved by determining which among the various available options is the most virtuous."

25. I will say this. Contrary to some philosophers' arguments, input-sensitivity is common sense. We think your intentions, choices, purposes, etc. highly relevant to whether you acted permissibly. Input-determination, while it concedes a place for constitutive luck, has the advantage over merely input-sensitive accounts that it reduces the import of opportunity/situational-luck and eliminates effects-luck. Finally, input-drive offers the best account of why virtues retain their moral status across possible worlds. Wishing others well, for example, would remain good, in the sense of good-*making*, even in situations and worlds where it did not generally lead to helpful acts or beneficial effects.

26. We should be explicit that (i) the information to which someone occupying the sub-role of information-provider is to be specially committed is the proposition asserted, and (ii) she occupies this role specifically in relation to the person she addresses. We could say that the speaker occupies a new sub-role of information-that-*p*-provider-to-her-targeted-audience for every proposition *p* she asserts to them, but it seems better simply to say that in asserting she occupies the role of information-provider-to-them, with

the understanding that it is the specific propositions asserted to which her level of commitment constitutes her role-virtue (that is, her being a good information-provider-to-them).

27. Note that here, as throughout the moral realm, the standard is not determined by what is usual.

28. We should also observe at this point that a social presumption that one ought to talk about (or, at least, ought to be willing to talk about) one's private life, including its shameful aspects, and that there is nothing objectionable in asking about such details, even in private, breeds deception and even lying. At its extreme, one hopes, this regimen of 'openness,' which is a social vice that disfigures and undermines social intercourse, will self-destruct as the bad practice of deception becomes so widespread that it issues in the good effect that people no longer treat such interrogatives and responses as real questions and answers. Making false utterances in such circumstances may become so commonplace that people no longer expect the truth or see such interrogatives as calling for truthful responses. Then, as with the question 'How are you?' a bit of pretended niceness that is really rude prying if taken seriously, false responses may no longer count as false assertions, and thus not count as lies. Such habits of untruthfulness are undesirable, of course, and it is to hoped that people re-learn the virtues of restraint and deference in asking questions, and of modesty in providing information.

29. In a similar vein, Geach talks approvingly of the saints' "snakish cunning." Geach (1977). His reference is to Matthew 10: 16: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves."

30. On the varieties of moral luck, see, especially, "Moral Luck", in Nagel (1979).

31. Thus, there are situations in which even intentional verbal deception short of lying will be impossible to justify morally. This is so, for example, when the giving of information is especially the point of a role, such as is true when the agent is acting as a teacher (including that sub-role within parenthood), or such roles as that of physician, lawyer, or other professional whose job is to provide expert information on whose basis the role-respondent is to make decisions. Note that while these roles are not themselves morally-determinative, some of them are extensions of aspects of such roles. Intentional verbal deception short of lying will also be unacceptable when there is an explicit promise to provide full information as, for example, when someone testifies in court with or without religious oath.

32. A 'liar-betrayer predicament' is a case, like the famous one from Kant, where someone faces a choice between lying to one party (usually a vicious one) and risking betrayal of other, innocent people. (By betraying their whereabouts to enemies, for example.) I adapt the term from Kemp and Sullivan.

33. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 110, art. 3, obj. 4.

34. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 110, art 3, and reply ad 4.

35. Some, of course, at this point will want to invoke Kant's strictures against treating another merely as a means. The meaning of that formulation is quite obscure, unfortunately, so I try to develop the approach in different terms. In any case, it probably would do me no good to invoke Kant's authority here, since his arguments and positions on lying are widely regarded as among his least persuasive. I leave it to others to say whether the substantive position I sketch captures the heart of Kant's own view.

36. MacIntyre (1995), p. 359; emphases added.

37. MacIntyre (1995), p. 355.
38. MacIntyre (1995), p. 357; emphases added.
39. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sec. 2485.
40. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 110, art. 4; see also Grisez (1993), sec. 7 C, esp. f, i.
41. Aquinas suggests that lying is connected to justice in a complicated and obscure way. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 110, art. 3.
42. Augustine, *Contra Mendacium*: 14, 7, 7.
43. Someone is in such relative perplexity when "as a result of violating one or more . . . precepts, [he finds] there is a precept he can obey only if he violates another." (Donagan (1984), p. 285)
44. This suggestion adopts and adapts Santurri's interpretation of Aquinas' conception of moral perplexity *secundum quid*, which I find more appealing than that of Donagan. On Sanrurri's view, if I understand it, the agent in relative perplexity is not really in a moral dilemma, as that term is usually understood today, because there is always something she could do without sin. (See Santurri.)
45. Frankfurt (1993), p. 6.
46. Epictetus lamented that the philosophers of his day told lies even though they had at hand philosophical proofs that lying was wrong. We are not so lucky nowadays. (*Enchiridion*, para. 51) We tell our lies, but, like Mill, those whom Geach with mordant accuracy calls the "Professors of Lying" are all too quick to offer arguments in defense of lies of this or that category.
47. Donagan (1977), chap. 3.

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